by the outbreak and neither supported nor opposed it. In several places the movement fell into the hands of the Anarchists. In some occupied mills the workers resumed operations and marketed their output, with the understanding the proceeds would be distributed among the strikers. In many places armed Red guards were organized to defend the mills against the police or a Fascist assault. There was plenty of fist-swinging, but casualties were few. The newspapers demanded that the government take drastic measures. Mussolini offered the services of his Black Shirts to restore order. The Ministry of Labor urged the workers entrenched in the mills to vacate them.

After the attempt to operate the mills failed, the movement began to subside. The plants were restored to their owners. The government prided itself on having settled the crisis without bloodshed, but this incident became the turning point in Italian politics. Mussolini had emerged as the last hope of the conservative, property-minded elements, the strong man who would restore order to the country. Money flowed into his treasury. His publications still carried revolutionary slogans and used anarcho-syndicalist language, but now he was the champion of order, strong government, national traditions, respect for property—all this in the interest of the common people, the victims of capitalist exploitation.

I listened with amusement to the talk about the sources of Mussolini's philosophy: Machiavelli, Sorel, Blanqui, Nietzsche. To me, he was a disciple of Lenin. For him the essential was not the program but the movement itself, and in this he followed Lenin's formula: strict centralization, a pyramid of obedient agents, a single will at the top, substantial leeway for local units within the framework of general directives issued by the center. The Fascist organization was kept in a state of continuous frenzy by inflammatory propaganda. It had no positive program nor did it claim to have one. It had only negative objectives: against the Socialists, against the Liberals, against the rule by ballot. All this was undiluted Leninism, with only incidental similarity to Machiavelli (the cult of authority and ruthlessness), Sorel (anti-parliamentarism), Blanqui (action by small groups directed from the top), Nietzsche (glorification of brute force).

By the end of 1920, Mussolini openly claimed all power for himself and his Black Shirts. This claim seemed preposterous to political observers accustomed to measure the pulse of a nation by ballots. It did not seem so to me. The November coup in Petrograd had shown that a handful of resolute men, supported by the garrison of the capital, can seize power in a nation in a period of internal dissensions and strains.

Mussolini cut a strange figure on the scene of Italian politics: an ignoramus in comparison with Nitti; a street urchin in compari-